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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between level of vocational development and career choice, knowledge and perceptions of occupations and level of aspiration among college females. Subjects were selected from the dormitory population at the University of Connecticut using a random stratified method so as to include a total of 75 students from each of four undergraduate grade levels. Subjects were administered a series of tests and a questionnaire (including the Occupational Prestige Scale--Short Form, the Occupational Aspiration Scale, and the Crites Vocational Development Inventory) during the summer and fall of 1972. The data analysis to be completed in October 1972, includes the use of the statistical techniques of analysis of variance and multiple correlation. The results should provide counselors and other educators information with which to help females become fully functioning in the world of work. (Author)

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KNOWLEDGE OF OCCUPATIONS, LEVEL OF ASPIRATION, CAREER CHOICE AND LEVEL OF VOCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AMONG COLLEGE WOMEN*

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Introduction

In the January 7, 1973, issue of Parade Magazine, the following short news note appeared:

Shifting Goals

How many young women graduating from college expect to become full-time housewives within five years of their graduation?

The answer, at least at Stanford University, is fewer than one out of every 25.

According to a 1972 study of the typical female Stanford senior, "she no longer accepts the traditional role which society assigned to her as a member of the female sex. Graduating men and women seniors have now very similar education and occupational aspirations."

This contrasts sharply with the traditional goal of the girl who was sent to college by her parents primarily to obtain a Mrs. degree.

In a related development, government baby-counters have announced that during the first nine months of 1972, American women had fewer children than ever before. In fact they were having children at so low a rate that if continued over a long period, the American population would decline . . . Among causes of this lower rate of motherhood, experts cited the tendency of more women to work, to marry later in life and to postpone having children.

Peters and Hansen (1971) state that "Women are typically stereotyped in the homemaker role, and when they enter the labor market they do so in selected occupations." It is little wonder that a major issue of the feminists is equal employment practices.

The role of women in American society is changing, as are their attitudes and values. A major area where change is noted is in the vocational area. The change probably results from the increase in the number of women exposed to the job market.

Bureau of Labor projections indicate that nine out of ten women now in school will be employed in the future, and that more than one-third of the total labor force in 1970 were women.

Research by Turner (1964) indicates that more than 50 % of the college women he surveyed plan a lifetime career, either in conjunction with marriage

or with no marriage plans.

For many women, the goal is not just to be employed, but to find employment with is commensorate with their ability. And, for a nation that emphasizes equal opportunity and the development of human resources, the question is, what can be done to facilitate and encourage the vocational development process of able women?

Pringle (1971), however, points out one of the major problems.

> Furthermore, the research also indicates that counseling is less effective with females . . . This study . . . set out to investigate what factors at home and at school contributed to maximum motivation for boys and girls. It concluded that, "Effects to increase motivation, such as special counseling and teacher attention, appeared to have little long-range effect on girls, whereas these same efforts seemed to have an immediate and relatively long-lasting effect on boys.

The implicit feeling of this article was that the schools either consciously or unconsciously restrict the development of females and/or are unaware of effective means of maximizing the potential of female students. Either or both alternatives are certainly possible. However, the lack of awareness of effective means of developing the potential of females is the factor which has the most documentation. Psathas (1968) states that "The relative scarcity of research directed toward the study of occupational roles for women is all the more surprising when seen against the background of statistical data relating to the contemporary composition of the labor force."

Educators and counselors simply have a lack of information on the vocational development of women. Much of the research that is available on women is contradictory. Women seek intrinsic versus extrinsic rewards from careers, (Peters and Hansen, 1971); highly ambitious women are different from highly ambitious men, (Turner, 1964); career oriented women are more likely to come from higher socio-economic levels (Almquist and Angrist, 1970);

career oriented women are no more likely to come from higher socio-economic levels than from lower socio-economic levels (Blumen, 1969).

It is evident that additional research on the vocational development process of females is needed. A major question needing study is: What relationships exist between various elements of the vocational development process of women? Do women who have higher levels of vocational development aspire to higher level occupations; are they more aware of the occupational world?

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between level of vocational development, career choice, knowledge and perception of occupations, and level of occupational aspiration among college females.

Specifically, it was hypothesized that:

1. Women with a higher level of vocational development would also have significantly greater knowledge of occupations.
2. Women with a higher level of vocational development would have higher occupational aspirations.
3. There are significant relationships between and among level of vocational development, perception of occupational prestige, and occupational aspiration.

Methods

Subjects were selected at random from the University of Connecticut dormitory population. Dormitories selected included co-ed and non co-ed settings since it was felt that women choosing a particular setting might have personal orientations which might relate not only to choice of dormitory, but to vocational attitudes as well.

Some three hundred questionnaires were distributed to the selected subjects, and of this group, 199 subjects returned the questionnaires. The questionnaire included a personal data sheet which requested information on academic major, career choice, socio-economics of parents, and career and

marriage plans. The questionnaire also included several research instruments. Among these were: Vocational Development Inventory (VDI) (Crites, 1971), Occupational Aspiration Scale (Haller and Miller, 1963), and the Occupational Prestige Scale (Thompson and Tseng, 1972).

All three instruments are well-established research instruments with acceptable reliability and validity data.

Variables were studied using both t-test and correlation techniques.

The analysis consisted of t-tests carried out on the scores on the Occupational Prestige Scale and Occupational Aspiration Scale, using scores on the Vocational Development Inventory (VDI) as the independent variable. Using the median-split technique, subjects were grouped into high and low vocational development categories based on their score on the VDI. Also an intercorrelation matrix was generated for the three variables.

Results

Analysis of the data indicates strong support for the three hypotheses.

Women with higher levels of vocational development demonstrated significantly more knowledge of occupations in their rankings on the Occupational Prestige Scale ($t = 1.68$, $p = < .05$). Mean values for the high and low vocational development groups are presented in Table I. (Note: The scoring on the Occupational Prestige Scale is such that the higher the score, the more inaccurate the subject's perception of the prestige hierarchy of occupations.)

On occupational aspiration, three scores were computed for each subject. These were realistic aspiration, idealistic aspiration, and total (which is the combined score of realistic and idealistic aspiration). The t-values indicate that on all three occupational aspiration scores, women in the high

vocational development group had significantly higher levels of occupational aspiration ($t = 2.15$, $t = 1.67$, $t = 2.40$, $p =< .05$). Mean values are shown in Table I.

The correlation matrix shown in Table II indicates that significant relationships do exist between and among the variables studied. Out of a possible of seven variable pairings (excluding the three pairings between occupational aspiration which are all significantly related) four of the relationships proved to be significant at the .05 or .01 level.

Vocational development was significantly associated with higher levels of occupational aspiration (realistic and total score). Accurate perception of the occupational prestige hierarchy was related to higher levels of occupational aspiration (idealistic and total scores).

Discussion

Generally, the findings presented here reflect what would be expected and hypothesized if one were describing vocational development among male subjects. Vocationally mature women demonstrate greater knowledge of occupations and aspire to higher level occupations much the same as vocationally mature males do.

The scores for this sample were compared to research data available for the three instruments used. This comparison indicated the following.

1. The current total sample had a mean vocational development score of 39.1. This compares to a mean of 38.8 for a sample of 429 college freshmen (both males and females) from the state of Pennsylvania.
2. On occupational aspiration, the sample mean was 47.9. This compares to data which indicates that a sample of 679 male high school students had mean scores of 36.7. No data for females or college populations

are available. The mean score of 47.9 is roughly equivalent to aspirations at the professional occupation level such as a sociologist, biologist or public school teacher.

3. On perception of occupational prestige the sample mean was 37.9. Data are available from two previous studies which are helpful in interpreting this sample mean. A group of 40 first-year male graduate students (education majors) had a mean score of 30.8, while a group of male high school students (N = 250, equally distributed between grades 9-12) had a mean score of 68.8.

In review, it would appear that this sample of college women are functioning at a relatively high level of vocational development. They are knowledgeable about occupations and they aspire to higher level occupations. Other data collected in the questionnaire indicates that of 187 women responding to a question on future work plans (after college), 155 planned to work full-time after marriage (or not to marry at all). A study quoted earlier in this paper (Turner, 1964) also done on a college campus, indicated that slightly more than 50 % of the college women surveyed planned a lifetime career. In the current sample, 83 % planned a lifetime career. This would seem to be a major shift in attitudes in the short period of eight years. In a related question, the subjects were asked about their career interest, and about 75 % (129 of 197) indicated they believed themselves to have either "somewhat or much more" interest in a personal career than other women their age.

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TABLE I

Means and t-test values on comparisons of high and low vocational development groups on perception of occupational prestige and occupational aspiration.

	High Vocational Development MEANS	Low Vocational Development MEANS	t-values*
Perception of Occupational Prestige	36.2	39.5	1.68
Realistic Occupational Aspiration	21.2	19.1	2.15
Idealistic Occupational Aspiraton	28.5	27.4	1.67
Total Occupational Aspiration	49.7	46.6	2.40

* With an N of 199, a t-value of 1.65 is required for significance at the .05 level.